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**Summary record of the 26th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 5 November 2002, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman*: Mr. Suazo ..... (Honduras)
*later*: Mr. Benmellouk (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Morocco)
*later*: Mr. Suazo (Chairman) ..... (Honduras)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

**Agenda item 92: Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields** (*continued*)
(A/C.2/57/L.28)

*Draft resolution A/C.2/57/L.28*

1. **Mr. Vallenilla** (Venezuela) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that its sponsors were trying to improve the follow-up to the outcomes of the recent United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields by establishing a working group to create the follow-up mechanisms. It was to be hoped that the draft resolution would be favourably received by the developed countries.

**Agenda item 96: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** (*continued*)
(A/57/496)

2. **Ms. Escorel de Moraes** (Brazil) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that in the coming years the international community would have to focus on implementation of the decisions of the United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. Brazil encouraged the international community to give due support to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation between Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the Donor Community.

3. Despite its limited resources, Brazil was determined to contribute to the development of the least developed countries. In that connection, it had been involved in various initiatives of technical cooperation, debt alleviation or cancellation and capacity-building, particularly with the Portuguese-speaking African countries, as well as with other African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries. Brazil's experience in the areas of health, HIV/AIDS, education, agriculture and professional training had been replicated in those countries with very encouraging results. Convinced of the merits of South-South cooperation, as a complement to North-South cooperation, Brazil was ready to share its best practices with partners around the world and invited developed countries and the United Nations system to enhance their support for such cooperation, including through triangular mechanisms.

4. In the Brussels Programme of Action and Declaration, the Millennium Declaration, the Doha Ministerial Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government had agreed on the need to create an international environment conducive to development that supported and complemented the efforts of developing countries. However, without increased ODA flows, direct investments, debt relief and market access for products of developing countries, the Millennium Development Goals were unlikely to be met. In that connection, Brazil welcomed the Millennium Campaign launched by the Secretary-General to increase support for those goals.

5. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) could make an important contribution to improving the quality of life in African countries. Brazil therefore urged the international community and the United Nations system to support NEPAD and translate their commitments into concrete actions.

6. **Ms. Seljuki** (Afghanistan) welcomed the creation of the Office of the High Representative and asked the international community to extend all necessary support and cooperation to its work and to make voluntary contributions so that the Office could carry out its functions. She also welcomed the International Ministerial Meeting on Transit Transport Cooperation, to be held in Kazakhstan in 2003. The landlocked least developed countries, which included Afghanistan, could not compete on equal terms in the world trading system because of their isolation from world markets and high transit costs. Those factors also discouraged foreign investment and other financial flows. As a result, their poverty eradication and sustainable development efforts were constantly undermined.

7. It was regrettable that the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, which had been held in Benin in 2002 and had adopted the Cotonou Declaration, had not referred to the plight of war-

stricken least developed countries and that those countries had not been mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (A/57/496). They constituted a distinct category with special needs and the Office of the High Representative should give them serious attention.

8. **Ms. Gustafson** (United States of America) said that the United States was fulfilling its commitments made at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and strongly supported coordinated implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, which depended on robust poverty reduction strategies developed in consultation with all stakeholders and reflecting best practices tailored to meet the specific needs of each country. The main focus of the Office of the High Representative should be advocacy for the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States and mainstreaming of the Brussels Programme of Action in the activities of the entire United Nations system. Implementation of the Programme should be based on the principles of national responsibility, good governance and aid effectiveness. It should also emphasize trade and the role of private investment and the private sector in promoting development.

9. She was pleased that several United Nations entities had mainstreamed the Brussels Programme of Action in their activities. The involvement of UNDP resident coordinators and members of United Nations country teams would be particularly important in that connection. They would work with Governments to identify key poverty indicators and report on the attainment of internationally agreed development goals. That would allow Governments to revise their national poverty reduction strategies as necessary.

10. At its substantive session of 2002, the Economic and Social Council had requested the High Representative to consult with member States on the appropriate format, such as a matrix of achievement, for a comprehensive report. The United States was not convinced that the Office of the High Representative should be collecting data. Other United Nations organizations as well as other governmental and international organizations were currently monitoring the progress of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. It would be more effective to work with existing tools and data that monitored progress, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the indicators developed for international development goals, including those in the Millennium Declaration, and the multilateral development bank publications of economic and social indicators.

11. She reiterated her country's concern that the mandate and functions of the UNCTAD Special Programme for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries would duplicate the work of the Office of the High Representative. She therefore called on those offices to strengthen coordination, avoid duplication of effort and ensure that the programmes were mutually supportive.

12. Lastly, she commended the work done by the High Representative and his staff on behalf of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and the action taken to mainstream the Brussels Programme of Action in the work of the United Nations system and to encourage the creation of national forums and regional and South-South cooperation.

13. **Mr. Cajuste** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that over one third of the 614 million people living in the least developed countries survived on less than one dollar a day. The structural problems of those countries were compounded by the difficulties of their integration into the world economy. Although the least developed countries had considerably liberalized their economies over the past 10 years, they had not achieved the expected results: between 1990 and 2001, their participation in world trade had declined by half and they accounted for barely 1 per cent of total private capital transfers. The vicious circle of low levels of savings, low investment and low growth inexorably aggravated poverty and was a source of social tensions and extreme destitution. It also posed a problem for other countries, since it represented a threat to globalization.

14. The CARICOM member countries acknowledged that the least developed countries bore the primary responsibility for their own development, but their efforts must be supported by Governments and international organizations, in a spirit of shared responsibility and through the establishment of genuine associations, particularly with civil society and the private sector. The seven commitments assumed in Brussels could lead to significant progress in economic development and poverty reduction. CARICOM

therefore attached importance to the mechanisms for implementation, follow-up and monitoring envisaged in the final document of the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Cotonou. It was encouraging to note that the declaration adopted by the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Doha in November 2001, also recognized the needs, interests and concerns of the least developed countries and the importance of their true integration in the world trading system. Those countries should continue to receive special and more favourable treatment in the areas of trade and finance.

15. CARICOM welcomed the creation of the Office of the High Representative. With regard to Haiti, which was the only CARICOM member classified as a least developed country, the three main basic problems to be tackled were: normalization of the political situation; macroeconomic reforms, provision of specific answers to pressing needs and initiation of a process leading to sustainable human development. The international community must give support to Haiti, especially within the framework of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. In the opinion of CARICOM, although Haiti was not one of the highly indebted poor countries, it should be granted a moratorium on the servicing of the external debt. It would thus be able to strengthen its production capacity.

16. Poverty reduction should be the top priority of all international initiatives. In that context, it was necessary to fulfil the commitments made in the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. Since the adoption of that Programme in May 2001, insufficient progress had been made in that regard. Donor countries' contributions to the core resources of the United Nations funds and programmes had been constantly declining, which would delay the adoption of any measure to combat poverty in the least developed countries. CARICOM was therefore hoping for rapid mobilization of financial resources to enable those countries to establish a solid structural foundation in order to accelerate their growth rate and give new impetus to the economy on the basis of sustainable development.

17. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries, and undertook to cooperate fully with the Office of the High Representative. It was imperative to implement in their entirety the commitments set out in the Brussels Programme of Action in order to alleviate the poverty of the least developed countries. The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had, significantly, recognized that favourable conditions had to be established for the creation of wealth in the least developed countries, and it was clear that supporting local enterprises, especially small-scale and microbusinesses, would contribute to economic growth and reduce poverty there. Such enterprises were sources of livelihood for a large part of the population of the poor countries, and unfortunately they were not receiving as much support as they deserved. His Government's poverty reduction strategy paper for the period 2002-2004 attached special importance to small- and medium-scale enterprises and microenterprises, for which it earmarked business, technical and institutional support. Special attention would be given to small farmers, who made a major contribution to the economy of the country. Sustainable agricultural production would also make it possible to raise incomes in that sector and improve national food security. His delegation was confident that the Programme of Action would facilitate cooperation between the least developed countries and the international community in promoting sustainable wealth-creating activities in the poor countries. Furthermore, it expected that the development partners would support the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which would make economies of scale possible and would have multiplier effects, thus allowing the cost of development financing to be reduced. The development problems of the least developed countries were not insurmountable, and the international community's support for development projects in those countries was an investment that was well worth it.

18. *Mr. Benmellouk (Morocco), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

19. **Mr. dos Santos** (Mozambique) said that the Brussels Programme of Action offered the appropriate framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development in the least developed countries, based on the principles of national responsibility and partnership with the international community, particularly in the areas of development aid, debt relief and improved

market access for their products. Those concepts were also at the heart of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

20. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/227. It also recognized that UNCTAD would continue to be involved in implementing the Programme of Action through its research and policy analysis, technical assistance and capacity-building. Continued coordination between those two bodies was of the utmost importance, as was coordination with other United Nations agencies, programmes and funds and with development frameworks and regional institutions, if the objectives of the Programme of Action were to be achieved. National and regional mainstreaming of action under the Programme of Action in development activities should be done expeditiously.

21. It was disappointing that neither the Office of the High Representative nor UNCTAD were currently equipped with adequate resources. The resource arrangements applied thus far by the Office of the High Representative, based on the regular budget, extrabudgetary resources and secondment of staff from other United Nations bodies, had not met expectations. Both the Office and UNCTAD should be funded exclusively from the regular budget, which should be increased, if necessary, to allow both bodies to function properly.

22. **Mr. Adhikari** (Nepal) said that his delegation endorsed the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries. The economic slowdown and the problem of terrorism had diverted the world's attention from the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted a year earlier in Brussels, and the situation in the least developed countries had deteriorated alarmingly. Both poverty and conflicts had increased, and if the international community did not act urgently, it would be impossible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015. That could be done only if all joined in a common purpose. Official development assistance had to be increased, additional debt relief provided, direct foreign investment in the least developed countries expanded and better market access given to their products. Globalization had further marginalized the least developed countries, many of which were still excluded from the WTO.

23. His delegation expressed gratitude to the development partners which had contributed resources to help the poor countries and encouraged them to continue doing so. Also, it welcomed the outcome of the Group of Eight meeting in Kananaskis, Canada, in the expectation that the most powerful nations would make good on their promise to help the weakest ones. It also underscored the importance of South-South cooperation. It appreciated what the United Nations had been doing to promote the development of least developed countries, in particular by establishing the Office of the High Representative and by mainstreaming the Brussels Programme of Action in its funds, programmes and activities. However, the Office of the High Representative should be better funded to enable it to implement the Programme of Action properly.

24. **Mr. Erwa** (Sudan) endorsed the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries. He noted with profound concern that the General Assembly resolution on the creation of the Office of the High Representative had not been fully implemented: although in operation for over a year, the Office was still working with very meagre human resources. It was to be hoped that the powerful countries would respond positively to the Secretary-General's appeal to Member States to furnish every type of assistance and support, including voluntary contributions, so that the High Representative could perform his functions in support of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

25. The Sudan welcomed the announcement by the Government of Sweden in October that it intended to increase its official assistance to one per cent and called on other States to do likewise. New objectives for assistance to the least developed countries needed to be established: finding a radical solution to the external debt crisis and envisaging the possibility of debt cancellation, especially in the case of countries whose basic economic and social infrastructure had been destroyed by conflicts; supporting efforts to combat leprosy, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis; promoting the least developed countries' production capacity and competitiveness, giving them access to markets and facilitating their membership in the World

Trade Organization; and encouraging the transfer of technology in favourable conditions. In that connection, the United Nations, through the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, should draw up a practical programme for closing the digital divide that underscored the least developed countries' isolation in the international arena.

26. The Sudan hoped that the next report of the Secretary-General on the subject would contain a detailed examination of achievements in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and decisions of the major international conferences, identify the main shortcomings and submit tangible proposals for resolving them.

27. In conclusion, he strongly supported the remarks made by the representative of Cape Verde concerning the review of the classification of least developed countries to be conducted the following year. The Sudan called for an objective analysis of all indicators so as to produce the right decision and achieve a flexible and fair transition for States graduating from the least developed category so that their economies were not affected.

28. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that his country was firmly committed to making the Brussels Programme of Action a success. Ethiopia welcomed the actions taken by the development partners to open their markets to exports from the least developed countries and relieve the debt burden through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In that context, he noted with appreciation the European Union's "Everything but arms" initiative and the United States African Growth and Opportunity Act. He also appreciated the agreement by the Group of 8 (G-8) on a goal of duty-free and quota-free market access for all products originating in the least developed countries, and hoped that it would be achieved. His delegation welcomed the G-8 decision taken in Kananaskis to contribute one billion dollars to ease the shortfall of the Trust Fund for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and encouraged all official and commercial creditors that had not yet done so to participate fully in the Initiative. He also stressed the need to continue to ensure that the cost of debt relief was not permitted to compromise the resources of the International Development Association.

29. Ethiopia seized the opportunity to underline the need for an immediate solution to the fall and volatility of commodity prices in order to attain the goals of the Programme of Action.

30. **Ms. Rahantabololo** (Madagascar) associated herself with the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries, and welcomed the fact that the various organizations of the United Nations system had incorporated the Brussels Programme of Action into their respective work programmes.

31. For its part, Madagascar had formulated several development programmes from a global perspective of poverty relief. The Government had assigned priority to the rural population, which accounted for 85 per cent of the country's total population, and to young people, who accounted for almost half of the population. The authorities were doing everything in their power to attain the World Food Summit objective of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015. To that end, Madagascar was using South-South cooperation in order to improve rice production. In that connection, she thanked the Government of Viet Nam for sending specialists to Madagascar to share their experience and knowledge. The Government also paid particular attention to women in rural areas, who received financial support from bilateral partners such as Japan and Norway, and multilateral partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Although the results were encouraging, much remained to be done in basic areas including road infrastructure and the conservation and storage of perishable goods. Young people were accorded top priority in the development policy, and the prime objective of the national education programme was to increase the net enrolment rate by improving curriculum content and rebuilding schools destroyed by cyclones. Although the HIV/AIDS incidence rate was less than one per cent, a national programme to combat the pandemic had been established under the direction of the Head of Government. Since Madagascar's economy was based on agriculture, it was subject to climate changes; Madagascar would like to intensify international cooperation in that area in order to boost the cooperation already available through the Indian Ocean Commission, with considerable technical and financial input from the European Union.

32. **Ms. Held** (Suriname) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement made by the representative of Haiti on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Although Suriname was not on the list of least developed countries, she wished to make a brief statement on that issue, which was of concern to her delegation. If insufficient attention was paid to developing countries which were not designated as least developed countries, they too might soon need to be added to that list. Like other Caribbean and Latin American countries, Suriname was struggling to overcome military coups and civil wars and combat drugs and drug-related crime, while unsustainable practices in forestry, agriculture, fishing and mining threatened to pose serious environmental problems in the future.

33. Until 1980 Suriname had been classified as a relatively developed country, with a prosperous middle class and a strong and stable currency. The exchange rate of the Suriname guilder against the United States dollar had however plummeted and more than 60 per cent of families currently lived below the poverty line and women, who played an important role in the development of the country as the principal source of income for the family, were facing serious employment difficulties. If appropriate measures were not taken at the national and international levels, many developing countries, like Suriname, would have to be added to the list of least developed countries. That would make it more difficult for the developing countries as well as the entire international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and meet the commitments made at the various world summits.

34. She therefore called on multinational corporations to invest in the developing countries and urged international financial institutions, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions, to facilitate developing countries' access to official development assistance and to promote the doubling of such assistance, which would be necessary for full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

35. *Mr. Suazo (Honduras), Chairman, resumed the Chair.*

36. **Mr. Nteturuye** (Burundi) associated himself with the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries and said that the Office of the High Representative should concentrate on four priority areas of the Brussels Programme of Action. First, the situation of extreme poverty in which most of the population of the least developed countries lived must be addressed. In particular, the Office should draw the attention of development partners to the especially critical situation of the African least developed countries. To that end, it should ensure permanent cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. In that regard, the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Cotonou from 5 to 7 August 2002, had underscored the need to establish a special trust fund for the least developed countries which would be managed by the Office of the High Representative.

37. Second, the unsustainability of their external debt, a shared characteristic of the least developed countries, contributed to the spread of poverty and economic stagnation. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative to reduce the debt of the latter would not provide a long-term solution and it was urgent to envisage new solutions to finance further debt reductions.

38. Third, the commitment made by the donor countries in Brussels to provide the least developed countries with official development assistance equivalent to 0.2 per cent of their GNP could have positive effects but was insufficient and had not yet been implemented; nor had the contribution commitments made at Monterrey, Kananaskis and Johannesburg. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank, that aid would have to be doubled in order for the least developed countries to achieve international poverty reduction objectives. Furthermore, assistance requirements should be evaluated and allocated in cooperation with, instead of side-stepping, government institutions; he urged the Office of the High Representative to work to that end.

39. Fourth, some least developed countries and landlocked or small island developing States were faced with conflict situations which could usually be attributed to the link between poverty and war. The rich countries at times postponed economic assistance until the end of a conflict was in sight, but Burundi, which had experienced a similar situation, had found that lack of assistance for the population could wreak havoc

with the most solid peace processes. Accordingly, the Office of the High Representative should work in concert with the mechanisms created recently in the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions to assist countries in conflict to resolve that situation, in particular when those countries were faced with additional disadvantages such as being landlocked.

40. **Mr. Mumbey-Wafula** (Uganda) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries and said that the establishment of the Office of the High Representative would provide a sound basis for coordinated and coherent follow-up to the Brussels Programme of Action. The strength of the Office would be derived from effective coordination and cooperation with relevant parts of the United Nations, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It would be important to establish an efficient long-term follow-up mechanism, without which the two previous programmes of action had not been able to deliver tangible improvements in the lives of the more than 600 million men and women in the least developed countries.

41. He commended the High Representative for focusing international attention on the situation of African least developed countries, which had resulted in the decision adopted by the Ministers of Finance and Development of Africa to ensure synergy between the implementation process of the Brussels Programme of Action and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

42. The role of foreign direct investment was crucial for the economic growth of the least developed countries, especially at a time when flows of official development assistance were declining constantly. In that context, he urged the High Representative to continue his efforts to mobilize international support in assisting the least developed countries to establish a favourable environment for foreign direct investment and to strengthen institutional and human resources capability.

43. The Office of the High Representative should continue to mainstream the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action into the work programme of the United Nations system and other relevant multilateral organizations, and should also focus on monitoring the implementation of decisions adopted by the governing bodies of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes with a view to increasing the assistance extended to the least developed countries.

44. Uganda was not only a least developed country but was also a landlocked country. It was therefore doubly disadvantaged because of its remoteness from major export markets and the high cost of imported manufacturing inputs and trade transactions. High transport costs eroded the competitive edge of the landlocked developing countries in Africa, many of which spent more than 40 per cent of their export earnings for transport services. It would not be possible to integrate them into the world economy if that issue was not addressed. In that context, his Government attached great importance to the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation to be held in August 2003 in Kazakhstan. He called on donor countries and Uganda's transit country neighbours to participate actively in the preparatory process for that conference in order to arrive at an outcome which would boost mutual cooperation with a view to substantially reducing high trade transaction costs through the establishment of more efficient transit transport systems.

*The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.*